

Court Fine Crackdown Working Well

A new Oakland County Circuit Court pilot program that cracks down on unpaid court fines appears to be working. Recently, it was reported that almost every defendant was paying on time.

The five judges participating in the pilot program, which kicked off Dec. 4, tell defendants when they enter a plea or are convicted that they'll have to pay at least a portion of their court costs by the day they're sentenced.

People who don't have a court-appointed attorney are expected to shell out a minimum of \$200, while people who do are asked to pay at least \$500.

Those who don't visit the court's reimbursement division by the end of their sentencing day to pay at least that amount and set up a payment plan for the rest of what is owed face penalties ranging from community service to jail time.

The pilot program was designed to increase the collection rate of fees and fines, and to speed up the court's receipt of the money.

Obviously, this is a good program that should be made permanent, assuming it continues to increase collections.

From a fiscal standpoint, in this time of tight budgets, every penny coming to the county is badly needed.

From a "justice" standpoint, people convicted of various crimes need to quickly fulfill their community obligation and pay their fines and costs.